

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

METHOD AND APPRATUS FOR NETWORK IDENTIFICATION

A processing unit, for example a computer server, that is connectable to a data communications network, has a device reader for reading a supplied network identity from a portable storage device such as a smart card or the like. The processing unit then uses the supplied network identity from the portable storage device for communicating via the data communications network. The processing unit monitors the continued presence of the portable storage device. In the event that the processing unit detects that the portable storage device has been removed from the device reader, it signals a fault state. The processing unit can be arranged to power itself down where a portable storage device having same network identity is not returned in the device reader within a predetermined time. As a result, the processing unit from which the portable storage device was removed can enable action to be taken to avoid a network failure that could result from two processing units on the network have the same network identity (e.g., as a result of placing the removed storage device in another processing unit). Following removal of the portable storage device from the device reader, the processing unit monitors for the presence of a portable storage device in the device reader. If it detects a newly present portable storage device, it reads a network identity from the newly present portable storage device and compares the read network identity to a stored copy of the original network identity. If the network identities match, then the processing unit can be operable to cancel the timer and accept the newly present portable storage device.

25 Fig. 9